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FBI's Hoover Balks Crime Study Bill

By Drew Pearson

Rep. Manny Celler, distinguished and much-loved elder stateman from Brooklyn, has promised to pass a crime institute bill for research into crime, but he seems just a bit skittish about J. Edgar Hoover and another Brooklyn Congressman. John Rooney. Celler is shying away from putting any authorization for crime research into the new anti-crime bill proposed by President Johnson.

Pearson

The latter bill will pass fairly soon, though not under the original name—the "safe streets" bill. Republicans didn't like this title because privately they plan to use safe streets as a campaign issue against Mr. Johnson in 1968. The legislation has been tagged " The National Crime Bill."

Meanwhile, Rep. James Scheuer, a New York Democrat who comes from the Bronx, not Brooklyn, worked out a comprehensive plan for research into the cause of crime, how to get more community support for the police, and cures for crime. Scheuer proposed a new assistant attorney General in the Justice Department to handle this.

However, J. Edgar Hoover objected. Over the years Hoover has always protested when anyone in the Justice Department wanted to backstop the FBI. This was the basic reason for the long-standing feud between Hoover and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

Rep. Scheuer tried to sell his idea to Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who liked it but stated frankly that he could not take on J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover has now received his third dispensation to serve beyond the statutory retirement age of 70. He is now 73. Clark, a young man coming up in government, shied away from any showdown.

Also opposing the idea of any research into crime is crusty, cantankerous John Rooney, the Brooklyn Congressman who rides herd on Justice Department appropriations. If he won't vote the money for research into the cause and cure of crime, the money isn't going to be voted.

Republicans, however, are not so easily intimidated. Robert McClory, Republican of Illinois, has now introduced Scheuer's bill in the Judiciary Committee and proposes to push it whether J. Edgar Hoover or John Rooney like it or not.

Florida Giveaway

An innocuous looking bill, so technical most Senators won't pay much attention to it, comes up in the Senate Commerce Committee Tuesday. Actually it will drive a hole bigger than a 10-ton truck through the Federal Power Commission, the agency entrusted with protecting the public from being gouged by the big gas, oil and power companies.

The bill is the pet of two Florida Senators, Spessard Holland and George Smathers. It would give the Florida Power and Light Company special exemption from the Federal Power Commission on the ground that it is not in interstate commerce.

The Commission, after lengthy hearings, recently held that Florida Power and Light did operate in interstate commerce. So what the two Senator have done is to introduce a bill which, if passed, would overrule the Power Commission. In effect, it's a private bill aimed at giving special privilege to the ninth largest utility in the nation.

Last year a clumsily drawn bill aimed at the same exemption was defeated 9 to 8 in the Senate Commerce Committee with all Republicans plus Republicrat Frank Lausche of Ohio and Howard Cannon, Democrat of Las Vegas, Nev., voting for the big utility. The Republicans supporting the private bonaza for the Florida utility included Hugh Schott of Pennsylvania and Norris Cotton of New Hampshire, whose states are big power consumers; also Thruston Morton, Ky., Winston Prouty, Vt., and Bob Griffin, Mich.

This time Florida Power and Light was smarter. It hired astute Mike Feldman, former counsel to President Kennedy, and he has done a much better job of drafting the bill.

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